



PHOTO: STAR

Dangerous driving took its toll when a mini-bus went wild and hit a BRTC bus (right) immediately after ramming a CNG three-wheeler (left) at Khilkhet on New Airport Road yesterday, killing two people on the spot.

# Vajpayee eyes Dhaka's gas reserves

## Says Delhi is the only viable buyer

UNB, Dhaka

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has said Bangladesh has promising reserves of natural gas and India, whose energy demands are expanding exponentially, is the only viable buyer.

"There is obvious scope for win-win arrangements," he said inaugurating the "Hindustan Times leadership initiative -- the peace dividend" progress for India and South Asia" conference in New Delhi yesterday.

On 'win-win arrangements', he said the hydroelectric projects in

Bhutan illustrates this dramatically. "Bhutan's per capita income of \$600 today is expected to double by the end of 2005 when the 1,020-MW Tala power plant is completed."

He said energy is one area with the greatest promise of mutually

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# Rab fails to roll for lack of funds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six months after the swift passage of a law to set up the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) to curb rising crimes, the force is yet to go into action as it did not get funds allocation.

The home ministry completed Rab's organogram three months ago and sent a file to the finance ministry for funds.

The ministry agreed to foot the bills for the special force but is yet to decide how the funds will be allocated.

State Minister for Home

Lutfozzaman Babar told The Daily Star last night that Rab will swing into action 'soon'.

"We are satisfied with the way Rab is developing," he said.

The home ministry sought Tk 439 crore to form seven units of Rab with 5,000 members -- 60 percent from police and 40 percent from the army, navy, air force and the BDR.

The existing 275-member Rapid Action Team (Rat) will be merged with Rab when the new force starts operation.

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## 2 drivers killed in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two private transport drivers were found murdered in apparently unrelated incidents Monday night in the city's Gulshan and Mirpur areas.

In Gulshan, unidentified assailants gunned down a bus driver at Baubazar slum of Kuril Monday night.

Al-Amin, 30, a driver on the Mirpur route, left his East Kazipara, Kafrul residence at around 3:00pm on Monday after taking his meal but did not return, according to the victim's wife Mukta Begum.

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# PM seeks Russian help for subway

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday sought Russian assistance for launching underground railway services in Dhaka city.

The PM made the request when newly appointed Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh Oleg S Malginov called on her at her office in the afternoon.

The Russian Federation would evaluate possibility of developing a subway for smoother urban communications, the envoy said.

Khaleda also urged Moscow to

import more Bangladeshi products including medicines, leather and leather goods, jute and jute products.

Malginov assured cooperation in promoting Bangladeshi goods in Russian market. To enhance bilateral trade and commerce, he suggested exchanging business delegations between the two countries on a regular basis.

The ambassador said Russia views Bangladesh as "a very important country in South Asia" and gives importance to its role in the

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## Egyptian FM assaulted at Jerusalem mosque

AP, Jerusalem

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher returned home after his one-day peace mission to Israel deteriorated into a shoving match with Palestinian extremists that

# Eight Palestinians killed in raid

## 2 Israeli officials ambushed in Gaza

REUTERS, Gaza

Israeli troops and tanks yesterday swept into a Gaza Strip refugee camp, killing eight Palestinians in the deadliest raid for nearly two months and breaking a spell of relative calm that has spurred peace efforts.

Two Israeli officers were killed in Gaza Tuesday in the violent upsurge, which underlined obsta-

cles to negotiations after an Egyptian peace envoy was accosted by Palestinian radicals who branded him a traitor for talking to Israel.

Egypt's Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher, who won a cautious Israeli offer of support for a Palestinian truce that Cairo is trying to broker, played down the incident at Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque and said the peace push

would go on. Palestinians said about 20 Israeli tanks rumbled into a refugee camp in Rafah overnight, drawing fire from militants. More tanks, firing machineguns, moved in during the day.

Israeli soldiers killed a 50-year-old man and two gunmen in the camp, medics said, adding another

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## Outlaws slaughter 3 in Chuadanga

UNB, Chuadanga

Three people were slaughtered in separate incidents allegedly by extremists in sadar and Alamdanga upazila Monday night in a spurt in such assassinations.

Police said Khabiruddin, 42, of Punch Kamlapur and Ali Hossain, 32, of neighbouring Bara Gangni villages in Alamdanga were called out of their houses to Jalshuka field.

"They were found dead on the field with their throats severed," said a spot report.

The outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party's Janajuddha faction claimed responsibility for the killings, saying, "They were annihilated for harassing people as police sources."

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## JU DEADLOCK ON

# Students start fast-unto-death

STAR REPORT

Over 100 students of Jahangirnagar University (JU) yesterday began a fast-unto-death demanding an end to the stand-off between authorities and teachers that has paralysed academic activities since October 15.

"We want the affairs of the university to be run under a democratic system, the absence of which

has pushed us to an uncertain academic future. Our predicament is of least concern to the authorities. This has forced us to go on the hunger strike," said Shafiq, a striker and third-year student of computer and electronics.

In the face of ongoing class boycott by teachers and student agitation, JU authorities yesterday announced a special meeting of

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# 2 killed in 6.5 quake in California

## Search for survivors ends

REUTERS, Paso Robles, Calif.

Rescue workers have ended their search for survivors from a 6.5 magnitude earthquake that killed two women in this central California town and shook homes and skyscrapers from San Francisco to Los Angeles.

Two women were crushed Monday when the roof and second floor of the landmark 19th century clock tower building collapsed, officials said. The women were

identified as Jennifer Myrick, 19, and Marilyn Zafuto, 55.

A three-hour search of the wreckage of the building by a Ventura County urban rescue team with a dog produced no results.

"We searched any possible place that victims could be. We're very comfortable and confident that nobody else is inside," said Ventura County Fire Department Battalion Chief Scott Hall.

Police cordoned off a five-

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